

New Hampshire Special Education Program Approval Evaluation Report

School Administrative Unit # 27

Superintendent: Larry Burton

Special Education Director: Dr. Jonathan Smith

Final Report
May 22, 1998

Evaluation conducted on March 31 – April 1, 1998

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New Hampshire Special Education

Program Approval Evaluation Report

I. Introduction:

II. Status of Corrective Actions from previous onsite:

III. Issues of Significance:

IV: Citations to the New Hampshire State Standards for Special Education: (Commendations, Citations, and Suggestions per school)

Note: It should be noted that suggestions are not considered corrective actions and therefore are given as technical assistance. The district is not mandated to implement them.

SAU #27

I. INTRODUCTION:

A New Hampshire Special Education Program Approval Visit was conducted at SAU# 27 comprised of the following schools: Alvirne High School and the Web Palmer Vocational Center, Hudson Memorial School, Library Street School, Dr. H.O. Smith School, Nottingham West Elementary School, Litchfield Middle School, Griffin Memorial School and the Preschool Special Needs Programs. The visiting team met on March 31- April 1, 1998 in order to review the status of Special Education services being provided to eligible students.

Activities related to this evaluation included the close review of all the teaching certifications of special education staff, analysis of SPEDIS data and random inspection of student records. Interviews were held with the special education director, case coordinators, building principals, regular and special education teachers, related service personnel and parents as time and availability permitted. Throughout the visit the team had full cooperation from the school personnel and this helpfulness was greatly appreciated.

The report that you are about to read represents the consensus of all the members of your program approval team. Please keep in mind that this is a "report for exception", meaning that only exceptions to the N.H. State Standards have been addressed. If a component is not mentioned, that does not mean that the team did not review it; it just means that there were no exceptions to the Standards found in that particular area.

II. STATUS OF PREVIOUS PROGRAM APPROVAL REPORT: March 1993

The staff of SAU #27 have worked hard to address areas of non-compliance that were listed in the previous program approval report. Based on review of the 1993 report, as well as review of application materials submitted for the 1998 program approval process and visits to each of the schools, the team determined that many of the citations listed in the 1993 report have been addressed. Issues that still warrant attention include special education staffing patterns at Alvirne High School and the need for additional special educators at that school. This is not to say that the SAU has made no attempts to rectify this problem, but with the growing special education population there continues to be a critical need to ensure that caseloads for staff are manageable and that professionals have adequate time allotted for direct services to students. An additional issue still unresolved is the concern that was raised in 1993 regarding crowded conditions at the Memorial Middle School. This issue has not been addressed and the problem has worsened with crowded conditions now at the elementary level and the high school building nearing capacity. In regards to previous citations related to paperwork compliance, it was the consensus of the visiting team that staff within SAU# 27 continue to demonstrate extensive efforts at the building level to ensure that special education policy and procedure is adhered to. The team was favorably impressed with the comprehensive record keeping in each of the schools, as well as with the wide array of services made available for all students. For these reasons the team determined that SAU # 27 has put forth much effort to resolve most areas of noncompliance listed in the 1993

report. All of the staff in SAU# 27 are recognized for their efforts to ensure the quality and degree of compliance found in each building.

III. ISSUES OF SIGNIFICANCE:

There is an enthusiastic, supportive atmosphere within SAU# 27 for providing all students with quality education in the least restrictive environment. It was clear to the visiting team that SAU# 27 has placed an emphasis on the provision of services in the least restrictive environment. Each building embraces the philosophy that maximum benefits are derived from providing the opportunity of educational programming for students with disabilities with non-disabled peers. This enthusiasm and support for disabled students is fostered throughout the SAU by faculty, administration, support service personnel, secretarial staff and parents. In many ways it is clear that teachers and parents work together to offer a wide continuum of program options. Students with disabilities are involved in all aspects of school life, including extra curricula activities and sports. Staff within SAU# 27 are committed to providing quality services to all students and teachers were consistently described as outstanding guides and role models for children. It is evident that within SAU# 27 all students are active participants in their own learning and that the individual needs of children are being met.

Although there are many praiseworthy accomplishments within SAU# 27, there were some areas of concern raised by the visiting team. One concern to surface was centered on facilities and the crowded conditions within the Hudson schools. In some classrooms the team noted that instructional areas were not adequate to accommodate the learning needs and activities for students. This was evidenced at the elementary and middle school levels; serious consideration needs to be given to addressing the crowded facilities within the district in order to ensure that instructional areas for all students are adequate in size and space .

Another issue raised by the team was related to the Litchfield School District. Upon review of student records, interviews with parents and school staff, it became evident that there is a need to ensure that related services, as outlined in IEP's are consistently provided. Due to vacant positions and circumstances beyond the control of the district, there have been times during this school year when speech and language services for some students were disrupted or not available and parents not notified of the situation. The team did, however, note that this situation appears to have been resolved through the hiring of 2 part-time speech therapists. The second issue that surfaced in Litchfield was related to the preschool special needs program and placement decisions. As a minimum, the district needs to document a continuum of alternative educational environments for disabled preschoolers and that all students have the opportunity to participate in programs with typical peers in the least restrictive environment.

In summary, the visiting team was impressed with the wide array of quality programming made available to all children within SAU# 27. Specialized methodologies are being utilized for all children and special education programming is being carried out in the true spirit of the law. The citations that appear in the report that follows are due mainly to oversights in documentation of the special education process, rather than a specific chronic problem. Continued efforts must be made to ensure that student records are current and up to date.

IV. COMMENDATIONS, CITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS:

SAU WIDE

Name of Program(s) Visited: All

COMMENDATIONS:

- The staff in each school were consistently described as skilled, highly motivated and dedicated to the teaching/learning process.
- There is a good working relationship between regular and special educators.
- The special education director is an asset to the SAU; his leadership is well recognized and valued by staff.
- The model of case coordinators located in each of the buildings is working well.
- The SAU is commended for their commitment to providing services for students in the least restrictive environment.
- Staff are eager to participate in professional development opportunities.
- Special Education policies and procedures as outlined in the LEA Plan are quite comprehensive.
- It is evident that staff within each school have put forth much effort to ensure compliance with state and federal special education regulations.
- The SAU is commended for the implementation of “wrap around” teams.
- The building administrators provide strong leadership and are actively involved in all aspects of school programming.
- Parents are actively involved in the schools and voiced their support for staff in each building.

IV. COMMENDATIONS, CITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS, (Con't.):

CITATIONS : SAU WIDE

Ed.# 1119.06 Facilities

At the middle and elementary school levels in Hudson, not all instructional areas are sufficient size and space to meet the learning needs of students.

Ed.#1119.03 Curricula

Both preschool special needs programs at Nottingham West and Griffin Memorial School need to have a written curriculum. Student IEP's cannot serve as the curriculum.

SUGGESTIONS:

- The visiting team strongly suggests ongoing professional development for all staff and administrators in SAU #27 on topics such as adapting and modifying curriculum and dealing with challenging student behaviors.
- SPEDIS data reported to the NHDOE needs to be revised to accurately reflect the programs that are currently in existence throughout the SAU. Upon review of materials submitted for the program approval visit, several programs were listed that are no longer in existence or have no students or staff assigned to them.
- The SAU is strongly encouraged to support special education staff in obtaining endorsements in the areas of EH and MR. There is a lack of certified staff in these areas throughout the SAU.

PROGRAM(S)

All

COMMENDATIONS:

- The pre-referral system is well organized and operates effectively.
- Student files are well organized.
- Staff appear to be committed to inclusion and to delivering individualized and appropriate instruction which is not compromised by any factor.
- There are a wide variety of services to meet the needs of all students at H.O. Smith School.

CITATIONS:ED # 1107.02(b,d)

1 file: contained inaccurate information on the referral form; the dates did not match subsequent documentation.

1 file: the disposition was not within 15 days of referral.

SUGGESTIONS:

- The team recommends that all 5th grade classes be located in one building so that all 5th grade students are afforded the same services, curriculum options, programming, extra curricular activities, etc.
- It is suggested that all persons signing documentation identify their title and/or role.

Library Street School

PROGRAM(S)

All

COMMENDATIONS:

- The staff of the Library Street School take pride in and are committed to total inclusion.
- There is a strong sense of community within the school.
- Teachers are well supported by special education staff.
- The special education staff are knowledgeable and highly skilled.
- The principal is knowledgeable about special education programs and is very supportive of students with disabilities.
- I.E.P.'s reflect very comprehensive student profiles.

CITATIONS:

ED # 1107.02(d) 1 file did not contain written evidence of disposition of referral within 15 days.

ED # 1109.04(a) 1 file did not contain evidence of 10 day written notice.

SUGGESTIONS:

- Increased opportunities for staff development are suggested.
- When signing documents, team members need to consistently indicate the role they are serving on that team (i.e. LEA Representative, teacher endorsed in specific disability, etc.)
- Case managers should ensure that all objectives in the I.E.P. include performance criteria.

PROGRAMS: All

COMMENDATIONS:

- There are extensive student profiles on IEP's.
- Optimal full inclusion was observed in all settings.
- The school has a pleasant, healthy atmosphere – clean, bright building.
- Staff have a good rapport with the kids and there is a sense of communal school “camaraderie”.
- Teacher assistance teams are working well.
- Partnerships within the community are evident.

CITATIONS:

ED # 1119.03

Curricula:

The preschool special needs program needs to develop a written curriculum.
The IEP cannot serve as the curricula.

SUGGESTIONS:

- Staff should consider removing test protocols from individual files.

PROGRAMS: All

COMMENDATIONS:

- Teachers are committed to inclusion and provide for the needs of all students.
- There is a very positive atmosphere for students and teachers at the Hudson Memorial School.
- Staff are knowledgeable and caring.
- Staff work well together as a team.

CITATIONS:

<u>ED # 1107.03</u>	1 file: WISC III was administered by an intern and the report signed by school psychologist. The intern attended the evaluation meeting and was identified as the qualified examiner.
<u>ED # 1107.05(k)</u>	1 file: evaluation was not completed within 45 days, no extension signed by parent.
<u>ED # 1107.07(c-3)</u>	1 file: unable to determine if LEA representative was on team.
<u>ED # 1109.01</u>	1 file: parties assuming financial responsibility not stated on IEP.
<u>ED # 1109.04(a)</u>	1 file: no evidence of 10 day notice to parent of IEP meeting.
<u>ED # 1119.07</u>	Paraprofessionals are responsible for planning lessons and assuming teaching responsibility when teacher is not present.
<u>ED # 1125.03</u>	1 file: missing appropriate documentation of written prior notice.

SUGGESTIONS:

- Record keeping system might benefit from a binder that would hold papers in place as well as separate information in categorical sections.
- More focus should be placed on upgrading technology and improving the use of computers in classrooms.

PROGRAM(S)

All

COMMENDATIONS:

- The facility is well maintained and a pleasant learning environment for children.
- The community is commended for the provision of necessary supplies and materials for all children.
- The visiting team was impressed with the "Wee Deliver" school postal service.
- There is ongoing communication between regular and special educators.

CITATIONS:ED # 1119.01, ED # 1119.03ED # 1115.01, ED # 1115.02ED # 1115.04, ED # 1115.06

Programming in Regular Class Environments

Least Restrictive Environment

Continuum of Services

The Preschool special needs program does not provide for adequate interaction with typical peers. The morning session has no non-disabled children in the program and the ratio of typical children to special needs youngsters in the morning session is not equal.

ED # 1119.05(a, b-1)

Related Services

Speech services as outlined in some student IEP's were disrupted and/or not provided.

ED # 1119.03(c,d)

Curricula

The preschool special needs program has no written curriculum.

SUGGESTIONS:

- As part of the continuum of services, the school district should consider provision of programming for special needs preschoolers in community programs. This might reduce the number of students in the self contained program and open up more slots for typical children.

PROGRAMS: All

COMMENDATIONS:

- Staff are dedicated and child centered.
- There is good communication between staff and principal.
- Classrooms have adequate space to allow for special seating arrangements and to allow special education teachers and associates to work in an inclusionary setting.
- All staff take responsibility for provision of services to students.

CITATIONS:

ED # 1107.07

1 file: evaluation team did not have appropriate membership. Teacher of suspected disability (MR Program) was not present.

SUGGESTIONS:

- Student files could be better organized.

PROGRAMS: All

COMMENDATIONS:

- Staff are highly committed and very skilled.
- The physical facility is well maintained and provides a great learning atmosphere.
- The MR program is outstanding.
- The Vocational program is wonderful and beneficial to students with disabilities.
- The case coordinator demonstrates excellent leadership qualities.
- There is good cooperation between regular and special education staff.

CITATIONS:

<u>ED # 1107.03(a)</u>	1 file: contained no evidence of classroom teacher at evaluation team meeting.
<u>ED # 1115.03</u>	3 files: lacked evidence of appropriate membership of placement teams.
<u>ED # 1123.04</u>	1 file: record of disclosure was missing.
<u>ED # 1125.05</u>	1 file: annual notification of rights was missing.
<u>ED # 1109.04</u>	2 files: contained no evidence that parent was given 10 day written prior notice of IEP meeting.
<u>ED # 1109.03</u>	3 files: no evidence that IEP team had appropriate membership.
<u>ED # 1119.07</u>	Paraprofessionals do not have adequate supervision and are assuming responsibility for designing lessons.

SUGGESTIONS:

- Student files could be better organized, with important information readily available.
- The visiting team suggests that additional services be made available for speech therapy and the school psychologist.

SUGGESTIONS, Con't.:

- There is a severe shortage of special education staff. Staff do not have time to adequately service students and implement IEP's.
- Increased availability of on-site counseling services for students with disabilities is recommended.
- There is a desperate need for a special education conference room to ensure confidentiality.
- There is a need to increase staffing patterns/schedules to improve the special education staff's provision of direct student services.
- It is strongly suggested that present staff be encouraged to obtain endorsements in EH and MR.

ADDENDUM

JAMES O. MONITORING PROGRAM

SAU # 27

March 31 – April 1, 1998

Student File Review

Case Study Document

Reimbursement Claim Form

Case Study Addendum Form

ADDENDUM

JAMES O. MONITORING PROGRAM

SAU # 27

COMMENDATIONS:

- The SAU is commended for ongoing communication with private facilities where students have been court ordered.

CITATIONS:

<u>1109.01(h)</u>	1 IEP did not indicate length of school day or school year.
<u>1109.01(i)</u>	1 IEP lacked academic component; therefore there was no objective evaluation criteria, procedures or schedules.
<u>1109.01(k)</u>	1 IEP lacked a statement of party assuming financial responsibility.
<u>1109.01(l, m)</u>	1 IEP lacked a transition component and statement regarding unneeded transition services.